

Message Text

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43

ACTION EA-14

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P R 231136Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6982

INFO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC HONOLULU

13TH AIR FORCE CLARK AB PHIL

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA BY POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 15282

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJECT: STUDENTS ATTACK CONSTITUTION (IV)

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: A. BANGKOK 15209; B. BANGKOK 15190; C. BANGKOK 15107

SUMMARY: JUST WHEN IT APPEARED THAT RECENT NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER OF THAILAND (NSCT) LED DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION WERE PETERING OUT, APPARENT CAPITULATION TO STUDENT DEMANDS BY PRIME MINISTER SANYA THAMMASAK AND SPEAKER M.R. KHUKRIT PRAMOT AGAIN STIRRED UP THE POLITICAL SCENE. THEY REPORTEDLY SUGGESTED TO REPORTERS AND STUDENTS THAT THE ASSEMBLY SHOULD (OR WILL) VOTE DOWN THE CURRENT DRAFT CONSTITUTION IN ITS THIRD AND FINAL READING, WHEREUPON A NEW DRAFT WOULD BE SUBMITTED AS SOON AS
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POSSIBLE FOR CONSIDERATION. THE STAGE IS THUS SET FOR A

MAJOR CONFRONTATION BOTH WITHIN THE ASSEMBLY AND BETWEEN THE ASSEMBLY AND THE PRIME MINISTER, NOT TO SPEAK OF CONTINUED AGITATION BY THE STUDENTS. THE CURRENT CRISIS SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN TOTALLY UNNECESSARY AND CAN ONLY HEIGHTEN DIVISION AND TENSION AMONG ALL THE MAJOR POLITICAL FORCES IN THAILAND. END SUMMARY.

1. ENGLISH AND THAI LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS CARRIED BANNER HEADLINES ON 22 SEPTEMBER 1974 ANNOUNCING THAT PRIME MINISTER SANYA THAMMASAK AND SPEAKER M.R. KHUKRIT PRAMOT HAD REACHED AGREEMENT TO INTRODUCE A NEW CONSTITUTION THAT WOULD MEET ALL FOUR OF THE PROTESTING STUDENTS' DEMANDS (REF C).

2. THE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT AUTHORIZED FOR RELEASE AFTER SANYA'S MEETING WITH NSCT REPRESENTATIVES, HOWEVER, SETS A DIFFERENT TONE. THE ANNOUNCEMENT INDICATES THE MATTER STILL RESTS WITH THE NLA AND QUOTES SANYA AS SAYING, "IF THE ASSEMBLY DOES NOT PASS THE THIRD READING, THEN I CAN PROMISE TO SUBMIT A NEW DRAFT CONSTITUTION FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE ASSEMBLY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE". THE BALL THUS APPEARS TO REMAIN WITH THE ASSEMBLY. BUT SANYA'S AND KHUKRIT'S APPARENT ADVANCE AGREEMENT AND EXPRESSED EXPECTATION THAT THE CONSTITUTION SHOULD AND WILL BE VOTED DOWN, REPRESENT UNDUE WILLINGNESS TO SUBMIT RELATIVELY DISPARATE STUDENT PRESSURES. THE STUDENT CONFRONTATION WITH THE NLA HAS THUS UNNECESSARILY PROVOKED A NEW CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS.

3. VOCATIONAL STUDENTS ARE THIS AFTERNOON DEMONSTRATING IN FRONT OF THE NLA AND HAVE ENUNCIATED FOUR BASIC REASONS FOR THEIR DEMONSTRATION: A) TO SAFEGUARD THE PRESENT DRAFT CONSTITUTION; B) TO SAFEGUARD THE MONARCHY; C) TO SAFEGUARD THE NLA; AND D) TO OPPOSE IRRESPONSIBLE SPEAKERS. THIS IS ESSENTIALLY A DEMONSTRATION IN SUPPORT OF THE NLA AND IN OPPOSITION TO THE NSCT. AS OF 1600 HOURS ESTIMATES OF THEIR NUMBER RANGE FROM 1,000 ON UP. THE GENERAL REACTION IN THE NLA ITSELF TO SANYA'S PROPOSAL IS NEGATIVE. WHILE MANY ASSEMBLYMEN SUPPORT THE "DEMANDS", THEY RESENT THE PRESSURE TACTICS AND DISREGARD FOR DEMOCRATIC AND CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES.

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4. PRIME MINISTER SANYA WILL MEET WITH THE KING THIS AFTERNOON ON THE CRISIS. IT IS THEREFORE POSSIBLE THAT ONCE AGAIN THE KING WILL PROVIDE A MEANS AROUND THE CRISIS THAT ALL CAN ACCEPT. WHATEVER THE IMMEDIATE OUTCOME, THIS CRISIS COMING SO CLOSE TOWARD THE FINAL READING ON THE CONSTITUTION ON WHICH THE NLA HAD WORKED ON FOR MANY MONTHS DOES NOT AUGUR WELL FOR THE TRANSITION TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT.

5. A MORE DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE EVENTS NOW UNDERWAY
AS WELL AS OF THE CONTENDING FORCES AND ACTORS WILL FOLLOW
AS SOON AS WE CAN CLARIFY THEM OURSELVES.
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